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C O N F I D E N T I A L LUANDA 000475

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ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU
KINSHASA ALSO FOR LIBREVILLE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/14/2017
TAGS: PREL PGOV MARR PHSA AO
SUBJECT: GULF OF GUINEA COMMISSION OPENS ITS OFFICE IN
LUANDA

REF: A. LIBREVILLE 00049
B. LIBREVILLE 00108

Classified By: CHARGE FRANCISCO FERNANDEZ FOR REASONS 1.4B AND D

¶1. (C) Summary: Embassy Luanda Charge visited the Gulf of Guinea Commission's new headquarters in Luanda and met with Secretary General Carlos Gomes and staff to welcome Gomes to

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Luanda and convey USG willingness to cooperate with the Commission. Having only recently taken possession of its offices the Commission is still awaiting its staff's arrival. Commission leadership appeared not yet to have developed a strong sense of its mission and work plan and was clearly in sticker shock with Luanda prices for determining its operating budget. It was also clear that the Commission has no role in either developing or assisting in the meeting Angola agreed to host at the last Gulf Of Guinea Maritime Safety and Security Ministerial in Benin. End Summary.

¶2. (U) Charge d'Affaires and P/E Chief met with Carlos Gomes, the Gulf of Guinea Secretary General, in the Commission's new headquarters in Luanda on May 14, 2007. One of the Commission's Deputy Executive Secretaries, Amb. Florentina A. Ukonga and Mr. Samuel, seconded from the staff of the Vice Minister of the Ministry of External Relations (MIREX) also attended the meeting. Gomes is from San Tome and Principe; Ukonga from Nigeria.

¶3. (SBU) Background: At the November 2006 summit, the GRA offered to host the newly ratified Gulf of Guinea commission, covering its start up costs as well as its operational costs for the first year. The GRA enacted the legislation to set up the commission in late March 2007. The GRA has outfitted an office suite as headquarters for the Commission with individual offices, meeting rooms, and a small auditorium. In addition, the GRA has provided houses for five employees in South Luanda. End Background.

Still Finding its Mission

¶4. (SBU) Gomes explained that the Commission had only recently moved into the facilities and expected to be in this

location for about a year while it searched for a permanent home. Current staff includes computer technicians and secretarial support on loan from MIREX. Other senior staff,

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including another deputy executive secretary (from Cotonou) and two directors (Gabon and Congo) not specified) is expected to arrive shortly. The Commission,s direct contact to the GRA is through the Minister of External Relations.

¶5. (C) Gomes welcomed our visit and said that the Commission would be happy to cooperate with the USG. The Charge d,Affaires responded that the USG is open to cooperate with the Commission and asked about plans for the upcoming ministerial. Gomes said that the May summit date was based on the November start date, but given the amount of time it has taken to set up the office, this was no longer a realistic plan. However, he was unable to elaborate any new plans for a ministerial. Gomes told us several times that he was waiting for the directives from the heads of state of the Commission countries to define his work plan. It appears that the commission structure and budget have not yet been approved, nor has it received any authorization for disbursing funds.

¶6. (C) Gomes was also not able to elaborate the Commission,s mission, other than to speak generally of the themes of defense and security, protection of hydrocarbon resources, harmonization of economic policy towards these resources, and pooling resources for technology to improve the standard of living in member countries. He said he was open to any suggestions we might have on the Commission,s scope of work. He also mentioned that he didn,t have a copy of the minutes from the Maritime Safety and Security Ministerial Meeting which we promised to send to him.

Comment:

¶7. (C) The Commission clearly is in its gestation stage and there is nothing to indicate that it will turn into a fully formed entity in the near future. Gomes indicated that there was nothing nudging the Commission,s member states to instruct the body nor did he seem ready to develop a plan of action and present it to the Heads of States. However, there was a genuine show of good will and openness to work with the USG. Gomes and his staff are still in sticker shock with Luanda prices for finding permanent quarters and with the slowness in getting things done in Angola. Gomes and staff also asked if the USG could provide the Commission with any type of assistance, buthe did not elaborate further. Embassy Luanda will continue to follow and report on the Commission's progress.

FERNANDEZ